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C O N F I D E N T I A L DUBLIN 000426

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [EI](#) [EUN](#)  
SUBJECT: IRELAND: CABINET MEMBER ON GREENS, EU COMMISSION

REF: A. DUBLIN 422  
[B](#). DUBLIN 419  
[C](#). DUBLIN 415

Classified By: Ambassador Daniel M. Rooney. Reasons 1.4(b/d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: A long-time insider in the governing party Fianna Fail (FF), believes negotiations on a new Program for Government with FF's coalition partner, the Greens, will be successful. She cautions, though, that the Greens are unpredictable. Also, Prime Minister Brian Cowen is consulting colleagues about his difficult decision on the next Irish nominee for the EU Commission. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) On October 8, Ambassador Rooney met with Mary Hanafin (PROTECT), Irish Minister for Social and Family Affairs. Hanafin, of the Fianna Fail (FF) party, is participating in negotiations on a new Program for Government with FF's junior coalition partner, the Greens. Green Party members will vote on the Program at a party convention this Saturday, October 10, and must approve the Program by a two-thirds majority (ref A). Hanafin said the negotiations were cordial, but then added that theatrics demanded that there be plenty of pounding the table and other indications of indignation on the part of the Greens' negotiators. On the night of October 7, a negotiator (whom Hanafin did not name) had gathered up his things and left the meeting in a huff, only to return the next morning calmed down and ready to continue talking.

[1](#)3. (C) Hanafin said she was confident the Greens would approve the Program for Government, but added that it was difficult to tell what would happen when dealing with a party in which each member's single issue often seems to override a comprehensive party program. She said she had the impression that, if some of the Greens had their way, the Program for Government would emphasize "hares, stags and badgers while everyone else in the country is drowning in this economy." (NOTE: some Greens members are strongly opposed to traditional Irish hunting. END NOTE.)

[1](#)4. (C) Hanafin said Prime Minister Cowen had recently been talking to her about the next Irish nominee for EU Commissioner. Echoing other interlocutors (ref C), she said it would be a difficult choice since taking someone from FF would probably mean losing a seat in Parliament thereby weakening an already slim majority, but naming someone from the opposition would be going against PM Cowen's grain. Hanafin said there was a window of only about two weeks to inform EU Commission President Barroso of the Irish nominee, in order to have a chance at getting a substantive Commission portfolio "such as agriculture." Hanafin added that the task of nominating an EU Commissioner had just gotten harder after the previous day's sudden resignation of the Speaker of Parliament (ref B) -- now the Prime Minister would have to find two qualified candidates for these "plum jobs."  
ROONEY